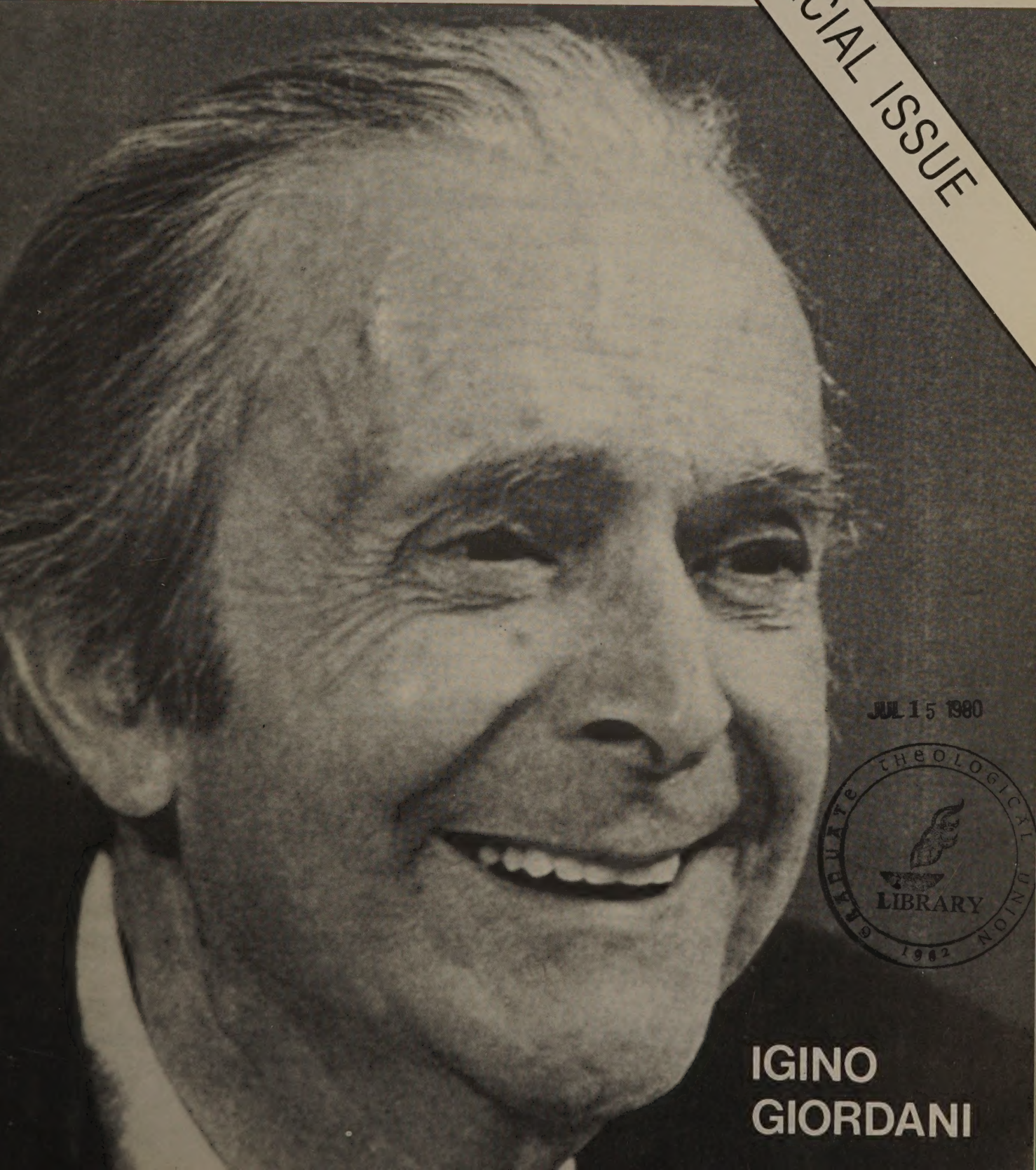
$1.00

livingCity

7 1980 VOLUME 19 JULY

SPECIAL ISSUE



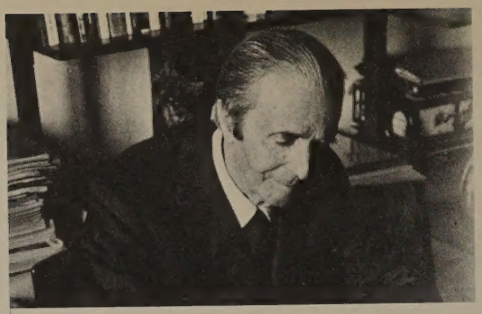
JUL 15 1980

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY 1962

IGINO GIORDANI

7 1980 VOLUME 19 JULY

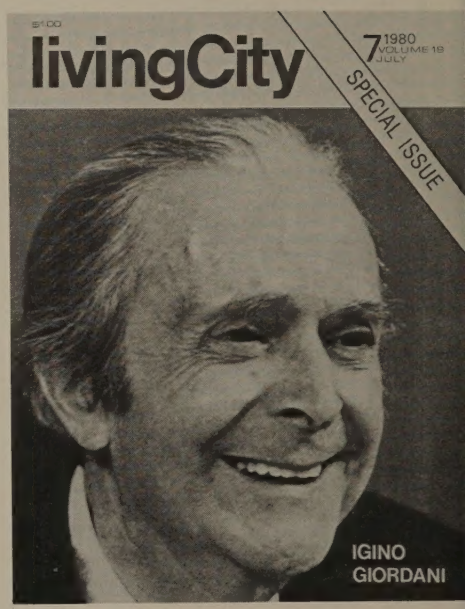
livingCity



2 *OUR GIORDANI: Reprinted here is the splendid eulogy given by Guglielmo Boselli, one of the first focolarini, at Igino Giordani's funeral.*

5 *IGINO GIORDANI — FOCOLARINO Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, says of Igino Giordani "He loved in such an exquisite way to make all those who came in contact with him think he had a special gift for this."*

Sharry Silvi	Editor
Nancy O'Donnell	Managing Editor
Lucy Comolli	Art Director
Doris Revere Peters	Contributing Editor
Marilyn Boesch James and Kathy Webber	Article Editors
Vera Giannini	Senior Copy Editor
Richard Tetreau Carolyn Johnson	Copy Editors
Longina Briones	Assistant Art Director
Mary Young	Circulation Manager
Rolf F. Rehe	Art Consultant



Igino Giordani in a fairly recent picture

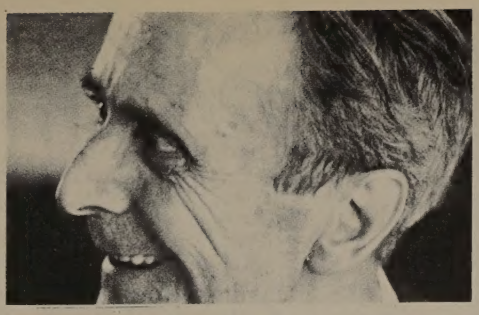
Living City is published 11 times a year (10 monthly and a bimonthly issue in August-September) by the Focolare Movement, a non-profit corporation, P. O. Box 496, New York, NY 10021. •
Subscription prices for one year: USA and possessions: US$10.00; Canada: US$12.00; Elsewhere: US$18.00; Air Mail (all countries): US$25.00. •
An envelope is enclosed in each magazine for subscriptions or renewals. Use this address for subscription orders and inquiries: LIVING CITY, P. O. Box 126, Jamaica, NY 11415. •
© 1980 by the Focolare Movement, Inc. All rights reserved.

OTHER EDITIONS OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

CHINESE: "San Sing Seung Yuet Hong" - 70 Waterloo Road 11 B/F - Kowloon - Hong Kong

DUTCH: "Nieuwe Stad" - St. Stephanusstraat 11 - Nijmegen - Holland

HOW I MET THE FOCOLARE: Igino Giordani himself tells his story, with that touch of subtle humor, combined with profound insights, which characterized his personality and writings.



12 *HIGHLIGHTS: A short, chronological glance at the extraordinary life of Igino Giordani.*

17 *PRESERVE THE LOVE BETWEEN YOU: This article focuses on Igino Giordani's role in the birth of the vocation of the married focolarini, which he described as ". . . the most beautiful innovation in our whole Movement."*

ONTENTS

TO OUR READERS

The different publications of the Focolare Movement in the world at this time are preparing or have prepared a "special" issue about Igino Giordani, or Foco, as we always called him. We are doing the same and I would like to ask you to read this issue of Living City from cover to cover because it is indeed "special". At the end you will not only know Foco better, but the Focolare Movement itself better.

Look then for more articles about Giordani also in the next issue of Living City. The space available in the present one, in fact, was not sufficient for all the material we had prepared.

I have no intention of adding anything to what has been so beautifully written about Foco. I will only say that, because of his great love, he always gave me the impression to be particularly fond of this part of the world.

In his letters he called New York the "wonderful city" (May 1974) and North America the country to which he was bound by a "divine love forming my joy" (Christmas 1976). To the married focolarini of Canada he wrote in 1977: ". . . through you, the Focolare Movement is gaining greater strength in reacting against hatred, wars, terror, and all evils which oppress a great part of humanity . . ." And this past January, in a letter to me and the focolarine of North America he wrote among other things, "From my little corner I remain united to you all. I pray for your sanctity and for your complex, vast but most interesting zone[1]."

Sharry Silvi
Editor

(1) By zone within the Focolare Movement is meant a determined geographical area where there are Focolare Centers and other centers of activities of the Movement.

Guglielmo Boselli	OUR GIORDANI	2
Chiara Lubich	IGINO GIORDANI – FOCOLARINO	5
Igino Giordani	HOW I MET THE FOCOLARE	9
Anna Maria Zanzucchi	PRESERVE THE LOVE BETWEEN YOU	12
Antonio Petrilli	GOD WAS HIS ONLY LOVE	17
Igino Giordani	DIARY OF FIRE	20
Gabriella Fallacara	PIONEER IN ECUMENISM	25
Chiara Lubich	WORD OF LIFE	28

ENCH:
"Nouvelle Cité" - 131, rue Castagnary F75 015
ris - France
"Nouvelle Cité" - C.P. 636 - St. Jerome - P. Q. -
nada - J7Z 5T9

ERMAN: "Neue Stadt" - Gleissnerstrasse 87 -
00 Munchen 83 - Germany

ITALIAN: "Città Nuova" - Via degli Scipioni 265 - 00192 Rome - Italy

PORTUGUESE: "Cidade Nova" - Rua Pio XII 274 - Paraiso, Sao Paulo - Brazil

SPANISH:
1. "Ciudad Nueva" - Av. da Rivadavia 4939 - Buenos Aires 24 - Argentina
2. "Ciudad Nueva" - Ferrer del Rio - 1 esc A, 2º 5a Madrid - Spain

OTHER ENGLISH EDITIONS:
1. "New City" - 57 Twyford Avenue - London W3 - England
2. "New City" - P. O. Box 332 - Manila, Philippines
3. "New City" - 367 Balwyn Rd. - Balwyn North 3104 - Australia

Igino Giordani greeting a group from North America visiting the Mariapolis Center in 1977.

OUR GIORDANI

by GUGLIELMO BOSELLI

Igino Giordani was a complex personality. The activities he engaged in during his life were manifold. We all know him as one of the most distinguished Italian writers and among the most outstanding international figures of modern Christian thought. He was an apologist, an ecumenist, an essayist, a biographer, and an expert in the Fathers of the Church. He wrote over ninety books, in addition to his many well-known translations of the Fathers of the Church. Some of his better known works are: *The Catholic Revolt. Sign of Contradiction.* and *The Blood of Christ.* This last is a book on the life of St. Catherine of Siena of whom he was a great admirer. He also wrote spiritual essays: *God, The Divine Adventure,* and *Mary, Model of Perfection.* Some of his other writings are sociological studies such as, *The Two Cities.* and the famous *The Social Message of Christianity.* The latter was translated into many languages and became a university textbook in America, Japan and other nations. In the field of narrative works, he wrote *The Walled City.* We are familiar with, in particular, his enlightened and careful effort to spread Christian social thought, going back to the first centuries of Christianity to search for vital historical roots.

Daniel Rops, in his preface to *Sign of Contradiction*, wrote: "Igino Giordani examines Christianity as a revolution which has come about historically, at a certain moment and in a certain place but which is forever being renewed among us."

Together with Sturzo, he was among the first to promote the involvement of Catholics in politics, giving life to the People's Party soon after the First World War. This was a new experience for Italian Catholics after the time of the "non expedit" ("It is not fitting").[1] He plunged into this new experience with great courage and with the conviction of "Let your yes be yes — and your no be no" (Matthew 5,37). This conviction caused his name to be removed from the Directory of registered journalists when, in a famous article, in which he did not mince words, he denounced the crime against Matteotti. The only reason for which Giordani was not sentenced was because he had been disabled in war and had received a medal of honor. After a brief period of teaching he was offered the position as director of the Vatican library where he had Alcide De Gasperi as an exceptional collaborator and a close friend.

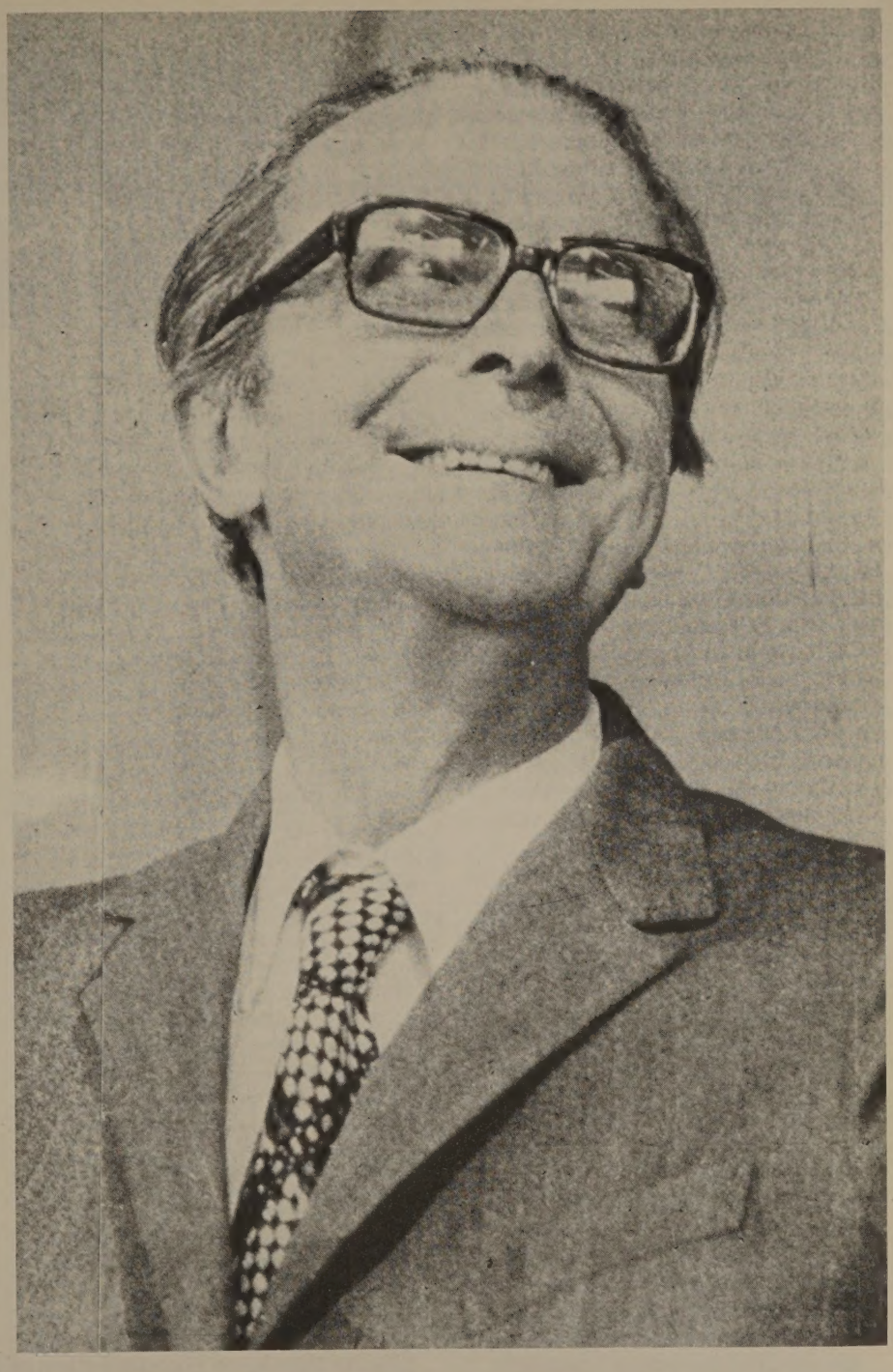
He then studied in the United States specializing in Library Science. While here he came in contact with many Christian Churches and communities and became more concerned for the problem of ecumenism and of unity among Christians. Later on in Italy he was known as a pioneer among laymen in this field, editing among other things a magazine called "Fides."

After his involvement in the underground activity which served as a preparation for the new political task awaiting also Italian Catholics, Igino Giordani became editor of two newspapers, "Il Quotidiano," and "Il Popolo." He was a member of Parliament during its constitutional phase and for the first legislature. His political commitment led him to undertake acts of prophetic significance. For instance, having suffered the horrors of war (he had been wounded during the First World War), he gave a brilliant talk on peace and disarmament which resulted in a unanimous ovation by all his colleagues. It seemed that around him in that moment unity among men of different ideological and political beliefs was accomplished. He was also the first man in

Italy, together with the socialist Calosso, to prepare a law in defense of conscientious objectors. Party colleagues and political adversaries alike remember him for the clarity of his convictions, his firmness without compromise and his openness to dialogue with those whose political and ideological opinions were different from his own. Yet, many remained his sincere friends.

The magazine, "La Via," was the vehicle of his journalistic activity. He wanted it to be a publication in which dialogue would be promoted. In fact, Sturzo and other politicians and intellectuals, Christian or not, wrote in this magazine.

With all this involvement Igino Giordani was still an extraordinary parent, very much loved by his children. He describes this relationship in a delightful little book.



We can see in Giordani a personality of great depth, with a variety of interests. A question then comes spontaneously: what were the roots of this personality? What compelled him to permeate everything he did in the social, political, cultural, and familial realities with this spiritual and universal dimension? It was a dimension that gave him an authenticity and which shone through all his actions, it was a dimension that allowed for frank and open relationships with both friends and adversaries.

Giordani gives us the answer in his book *The Divine Adventure*. His explanation brings us to his level of thinking: "Our neighbor is given to us to allow us to love God in him, in order to complete the function to which we have been called in this life. We have been called to fulfill the plan of God, which is to spread love, andthis is the equivalent of spreading the kingdom of God: God who expands himself in humanity. . . This is why our nature is social, not because of a contract or an institution. Society is the expansion of human nature created by God and redeemed by the Word. It is the integration of the individual who is permitted to live his life to the fullest, which means to love. Therefore, between the two terms, man and society, there is no conflict. . . . From man, one goes to God by means of one's neighbor; and society becomes a vehicle for the divine."

He also said: "Knowledge helps, but it is not enough. Love is necessary. Then you can talk with God, or more precisely, listen to God in the depth of your soul, even in the midst of activity. The silence of heaven wide open within us quiets all noise."

His ability to understand and to live the divine dimension which exists in things and in relationships came from a strong faith and a real humility. He possessed the humility of the little ones of which the Gospel speaks. Giordani's cultural wealth was not an obstacle, but rather it enriched his listening ability and helped him to appreciate even more the genuine supernatural values.

This ability to listen enabled him to understand the ideal of unity from his first contact with it. Chiara

1) This was the formula used by the Church from 1890 up to the beginning of the 20th century to dissuade Catholics from any involvement in Italian politics.
2) The building which houses the Italian Parliament in Rome.

Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, introduced him to it in 1948 at Montecitorio.[2] He immediately understood that this ideal of the Movement was the answer for our times. He became a supporter of this message of life in which he recognized the power of the Gospel.

Giordani found in the Movement a way to work out the problems of society within the Christian experience. He saw that they were separated from the spiritual dimension and impregnated by secularism.

In his new experience he recognized the possibility he had always dreamed of, ". . . uniting in a clear spiritual bond, laity and priesthood, and as a consequence, the profane and the sacred, the world and the Church, matrimony and virginity," and of building ". . . a community where single and married people, without distinction," could find the way to a full spiritual life. This was possible, ". . . if they understood that love is the highest perfection which can be lived in any state of life."

His presence has been a great source of inspiration and he has been a stimulus for many decisive developments, in particular for the vast spreading of the Movement into all segments of society.

Most important, he was the "first father of a family to become focolarino." He opened the way for other married persons to do the same.

His presence also opened the way for the participation of others in the spirituality of the Movement and awakened in them the vocation of total commitment for human advancement. Eventually this group became known as the "Volunteers."

Giordani's conviction that sanctity is possible for all regardless of state of life or age is evidenced by the great number of young people who have committed themselves to an evangelical life in the Gen Movement. Since its birth in 1967 the Gen Movement has met with great response and has now spread to over one hundred nations.

As the first married focolarino Giordani had an influence on the New Family Movement for the renewal of family life. The married focolarini are the backbone of this Movement.

"Our neighbor is given to us to allow us to love God in him, in order to complete the function to which we have been called in this life."

In 1959 Igino Giordani, with two other members of Parliament, opened St. Catherine's Center, which was meant to be a meeting place for politicians who wanted to base their life and their commitment on Christian ideals. Other similar centers were soon opened and were the beginning of what is today the New Humanity Movement. It too has spread to various countries.

Igino Giordani was the first editor of the magazine "Citta Nuova," a position which he held for twenty-four years. As editor he affirmed the close interdependence which exists between human advancement and the relationship with the divine in a short phrase, "Father in heaven and bread on earth."

He was responsible for "Centro Uno," the center of the Movement for ecumenical activities, and his presence and competence have been helpful in the different contacts which the Movement has brought ahead under the inspiration of its foundress. The spirituality of the Movement, centered as it is on the Gospel, has been welcomed in various Christian churches and communities.

Day by day Igino Giordani showed his charity toward everyone, even when he was suffering. Being with him one felt at home, not judged, but understood. Worries would disappear leaving a sense of peace and serenity which made room for a simple and true human rapport. He wrote in his diary: "Life is a unique occasion given to us in order to love."

He created around himself a family atmosphere deeper than that of a natural family.

Many noticed that as his capacity for supernatural love in God grew, his natural love toward his family, toward those with whom he lived in the focolare at the Mariapolis Center in Rocca di Papa, and toward those who approached him, became gentler, richer and more complete.

Married people were not the only ones to confide in him, sharing their problems and difficulties. All were certain of being understood because of his immense heart and his experience. Even the youth opened themselves up to him with an absolute trust. This capacity and wisdom which others recognized in him, appeared to express the developing of a "royal priesthood."

Igino Giordani's dream — which was the same as that of the Movement — was for everyone to be part of a large family, a united people. He firmly believed that Jesus' last prayer: "Father, that they all may be one, just as you and I are one," is not a utopia, but the reason itself for our living together here on earth. This unity must be accomplished first of all among those who are already linked by the same faith, and then expand to all people of good will. This is what he lived for.

In his last book, *Diary of Fire*, he brought out the characteristics of sanctity for today's laity. One can sense the high spiritual level he had reached. He wrote: "The Lord is drawing me near to himself, He is uniting me to himself in order to transform me into him by means of the teaching, the chemistry that is called suffering. Upon contemplating it, all at once, it seems to have that brightness of a blaze in the night: the fuel itself of his Passion in the garden and on Calvary. Is the cross getting closer? Then, as long as Mary is nearby, so be it. It becomes no longer I who live but Jesus in me, in order to be able to cry out after the abandonment and after the "Eloi, Eloi . . . " ("My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"), "Into your hands Father, I commend my spirit."

We remember him for the wealth of inspirations and gifts that he has been for us. Although we feel his loss, we are not sorrowful, but joyful. He was our older brother who had authentically made the choice of God, who is Love. He continued to pursue this ideal for his entire life. Now, God, who is Love, has received him in his light. ●

Igino Giordani

focolarino

by CHIARA LUBICH

It would be impossible to express here who Igino Giordani has been for the Focolare Movement. It is sufficient to recall that he is a co-founder of the Movement itself. Much is implied in being the founder or co-founder of a movement which the Church acknowledges as its own. It implies the intervention of God's grace in such a manifold and complex way, and such varied and valid impulses of the Holy Spirit. The individual, furthermore, must act decisively for that movement, even though, more often than not, his moves seem to be unforeseen because they are inspired by God. The life of this person is filled with sufferings which are often piercing and prolonged, and, at the same time, with extraordinary gifts of grace, light and love. It is, therefore, best to entrust the revelation of this person to the history of the Church and of the spiritual movements which adorn it throughout the centuries.

Perhaps we can say something about Igino Giordani as a focolarino, even if it will not be easy.

The rule of the focolarini confirms and expresses the will of God for them on behalf of the Church. There it is written that the primary goal for which they give their lives to God along this particular path is "to be perfect in love."

Everything a focolarino does — praying, working, or suffering — is aimed at reaching this goal: to become perfect in love. Even the specific aim of the Movement — which is that of contributing to the renewal of the Catholic world through the spirituality of unity, to the unification of all Christians, and to the conversion of those who are far from God — takes second place.

It seems to us that we can say that Igino Giordani reached this goal. As far as we can tell, he was perfect in love. He loved in such an exquisite way to make all those who came in contact with him think that he had a special gift for this.

Thus he personified the name by which he was known within the Movement: "Foco," which means "fire." He loved God and neighbor with a love that was both natural and supernatural, the kind of love which is the basis and apex of an authentic Christian life. In this way, he contributed in a unique way toward keeping alive among all of us the reality of the word of life which had been given to him when he entered the Movement: "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34) He now seems to leave these words to all of us as his final exhortation and testament.

He was very aware of God's love for him, even up to a short time before his death. He said, "I see God as the Giver," and then went on to list the gifts he had received from him. He carried this love of God within him and, in turn, poured it out on everyone. Therefore, he was perfect in love.

That is not all. On the day of his funeral, the Gospel passage which speaks of the Beatitudes was read. All of those who had known Igino Giordani well, were unanimous in affirming that he had lived them all.

He was exceptionally "pure of heart." This is why he opened the way for married men and women from every part of the world to consecrate themselves to God in a completely new way while remaining in their married state, through a spiritual virginity which is the effect of the most ardent love.

This purity of heart strengthened his most sacred sentiments at the same time that it purified them. By listening to him and seeing the way he acted, one could understand the words of St. Therese of Lisieux: "One's heart, in giving itself to God, does not lose its natural sensitiveness; on the contrary, it grows more sensitive as its love becomes pure and more divine."[1] He loved his wife very much. And at the end of his life it was both striking and touching to see the intensity of his love for his four children and his grandchildren. He was a perfect father and grandfather, and a man belonging entirely to God.

He was also, "poor in spirit," completely detached not only from all that he possessed, but above all, from all that he was.

He was full of mercy. Even the most wretched sinner felt that he had been forgiven when he was with him and the poorest person felt like a king.

One of his most outstanding characteristics (as is evident from the record of his political career) was that of being a "peacemaker."

He was so meek as to make one understand why the Gospel says that those who live this virtue will possess the earth. His extraordinary kindness, his special way of dealing with others, and his way of finding the right word for each person, won over everyone with whom he came in contact. He treated everyone with respect, making all feel at ease with him. Even young people were able to relate to him as equals. Especially in the last years of his life, something supernatural radiated from his eyes when he spoke.

Igino Giordani with Chiara Lubich in 1976, at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa.

During the course of his life he suffered both physically and spiritually. He knew, however, how to transform suffering into love and God relieved him from suffering here on earth.

His "hunger and thirst for justice," led him to struggle for it throughout his entire life.

He was persecuted for the sake of God's name, and it is because of this that we believe he possesses God's kingdom today.

There are many other words of the Gospel which also remind us of Foco.

He helps us to understand what kind of conversion Jesus asks of us when he says that we must become like little children.

He had been an excellent Christian, a scholar, an apologist, an apostle. Yet when he encountered a genuine spring of water which flowed from the Church, he "sold everything" in order to follow Jesus who was calling him to quench his thirst with this water. He recognized that this was a new sign that the Holy Spirit is always alive and active within the Church.

His humility was evident in many ways every day. He had reached the goal which he had set for himself back in 1941: "Humility and charity. . .to serve everyone. . .to feel oneself inferior to all the others. . .

because each one is made in God's image. . .Christ died for everyone. . . Only pride can make us lonely and sad."

If he thought that someone in the Movement wanted to give him special privileges because of his accomplishments, he begged to be treated just like all the other focolarini.

We might ask ourselves here how he succeeded in reaching such heights. What did he do to reach that goal, which allowed him to remain young even when he was getting on in years? He himself said that those who love are eternally young. Only those who do not love grow old, and those who hate are already dead.

For those of us who knew him well, the answer to this question is no mystery. It is true that his life was a steady climb toward God who is Love. At the same time, he did not neglect the means that the Church, in her centuries of experience, recommends to those who want to draw near to God — the evangelical counsels.

In these times certain religious practices are frequently abandoned, underestimated or judged unsuitable. He who was very intelligent and particularly knowledgeable about many saints, about whose lives he had written, chose the evangelical counsels as supports for his ascent to God, and he loved them immensely.

St. Catherine, whom he had greatly admired since his youth, had taught him to "tie himself down" because, as she herself said: "There are some. . .in whom the gentle, loving fire of love for this obedience grows so strong. . . that out of self-hatred and in order to completely do away with their own will. . .they bind themselves more strictly in self-contempt to slay themselves completely."[2]

For this reason, ever since 1948 when Giordani first came in contact with the Movement, he expressed a desire to find a way to consecrate himself to God with vows or promises while remaining a married person.

Giordani felt that the laity of his time was relegated to the sidelines of Christian life, almost as though sanctity were solely the heritage of monasteries and seminaries. He suffered a great deal because of this, and longed with all his heart to throw open the doors and break down the walls which separated people living in the state of perfection, from those who lived — as he jokingly said — in the state of imperfection.

He was extremely sensitive to the signs of the times. Indeed, we could say that he himself was a sign of the times, these times when the Holy Spirit (through the Second Vatican Council and in many other ways) is calling all the people of God to sanctity.

He was among the Italian scholars who were most familiar with the Fathers of the Church. He quoted them often, especially St. John Chrysostom who had said that married people should live like monks, with the exception of celibacy.

Nine days before his death, he dictated a letter for the person who represented the Church for him. Among other things, he wrote: "Today is the 9th of April. We are continually waiting to do the will of God which you will express to us. We are awaiting a sign from you because we absolutely do not want to err. Of course we don't want to carry our need to obey to an extreme. Therefore, I am asking you to give us your attention. . .Today we do not want to be estranged from the will of God."

Igino Giordani met the Movement at its beginning. The women's and men's focolare centers then were made up entirely of single people.

He was the one who opened the doors of the focolare to married people. They followed him in his desire for sanctity and consecration. In this way, something which had at first been only dimly foreseen, became a reality — virgins and married people could follow, insofar as it is possible, the same way, living after the model of the family of Nazareth.

In 1974, when his wife died, he entered one of the "focolare communities." He lived — as he liked to say — 24 hours a day with the single focolarini like one of them.

The focolare, a sort of modern religious community, suited to the spiritual needs of our times, molded him. The reality of the focolare is that of keeping Christ continually present among two or more united in his name. This reality formed him. It was like living between two fires - the voice of Christ within him, and the light of Christ in the midst of his brothers.

He was very independent by nature. In fact, he had left the seminary as a young boy because he didn't want to obey. This characteristic, which led him to become an aggressive apologist, disappeared completely as he went along the final stretch of the road that was leading him to God through his neighbors, as the Movement teaches. And he said that he was free.

Back in 1954 he had written, "My desire is to be immolated, closed, dead to the world. Though a layman, I desire to have the soul of a religious which I can offer to the Lord as an anvil, living the evangelical counsels as far as possible. If poverty, chastity, and obedience provoke the anger of Satan and of the world, causing me to suffer for not being understood, let me repeat with joy the words of the psalmist: 'It was good for me to have to suffer.'

"May I not squander the one life I have, accumulating money or power or other vanities. May I spend it as a light that burns on the altar of Christ. "

"May every action and every word be love; even breathing and working, along with every human relationship, may they be love. May suffering, in consuming itself, produce love, even if I have to cry out with him, the Crucified Love: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' "

As a real focolarino, he loved the Pope until his dying breath. One day I brought him the photograph of the Holy Father, John Paul II, together with his blessing. He told me, "What a beautiful celebration! Who would ever have expected this? It is impossible to say what a gift this is. I am deeply grateful. How will I ever be able to thank God? I feel like I am in heaven."

Giordani has been one of the greatest gifts that heaven ever gave the Focolare Movement.

---

1. Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux, trans. Ronald Knox, (New York: P.J. Kennedy and Sons, 1958), p. 259-260.
2. St. Catherine of Siena, "The Dialogue," trans. Suzanne Noffre, O.P., (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), Chapter 157, p. 334.
3. Louis Grignon di Montfort, "True Devotion," no. 217.

May, 1974. Igino Giordani is met by a group of focolarini on the day in which he entered the focolare at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa. He spent the last six years of his life here.

He generously gave the greater part of his life to this new Movement in the Church which also has another name, the Work of Mary. It is "the Work of Mary," because we all feel that here too, as in other times and other places, it is Mary, the Virgin, who is at work.

And we think that it was Mary who chose him, and who rewarded him as well.

St. Louis Grignon di Monfort, speaking of those people whom the Virgin Mary chooses, says, ". . . The primary gift that these souls acquire is the life of Mary in the soul, here on earth, so that it is no longer the soul which lives but Mary living within it. In other words, the soul of Mary becomes their own, if we can use these words."[3]

In 1957, after having probed the mystery of Mary's desolation at the foot of the cross, Igino Giordani wrote in his diary: "I was meditating on this mystery — such a reality of suffering — on the evening of October 1st, the month dedicated to Mary. After praying, I felt my soul suddenly free from every human creature and thing. Mary entered in their place, with the lifeless body of Jesus in her arms. My entire soul was filled with her presence, a combination of suffering and love. Through her presence, I understood how frivolous my affections for transient things were. She remained there for twenty-four hours, like an altar bearing its victim: 'Virgo altare Christi.' My soul became her room, a temple. But after twenty-four hours, this sharing in her anguish and my love for her brought about a sort of unity between her and my soul. It seemed as if she had become my soul. No longer was she my guest; I had become hers, so that I felt like saying: 'It is no longer I who live, but Mary who lives in me.'

"Her presence had, as it were, virginized my soul, marianized my person. My ego seemed dead, and Mary was in its place. I no longer felt the need to look up to the pictures of Mary along the road or to her images. It was enough to fix the eyes of my soul within to discern, in place of the usual sordid and grotesque idol of myself, the All Beautiful One, the Mother of the Fair Love. And even this poor, suffering body seemed to me to be a kind of cathedral, where Mary, with the lifeless Jesus, evokes the Spouse, who summons the Trinity.

"If I am not the most superficial person on earth, I must become a saint, in order to be in accord with this reality."

Just before dying he regained consciousness for a few moments and gave a marvelous smile. It seemed to us that this was a sign of that Paradise to which he was drawing near.

CHIARA LUBICH
Rome, April 30, 1980

HOW I MET THE FOCOLARE

by IGINO GIORDANI

It is a little unpleasant to speak about myself. However, here we are talking about an "I" which is in a precarious situation, because when you enter this Movement, it is necessary that the "I" be not only mortified, but dead. Therefore, I will speak about an "old man," who, if not already dead, is at least half-dead. This man was a writer who had tormented humanity with many books and thousands of articles. Poor man, if he should be held accountable for all of his useless words.

The main topics to which he devoted himself were many, the first one being apologetics.

As a young man I was impressed with the works of a great writer of the early centuries, Tertullian. Through his writings I understood that Christianity is a struggle. I began writing feverishly, my target being all the adversaries of the Church at that time, and, as a result, I earned the reputation of being an aggressive apologist. I translated Tertullian's masterpiece, *The Apologetic*, and I also wrote the preface. When Father Rosa, then the director of the "Civilta' Cattolica," reviewed the book, he wrote that it seemed to him that the preface had been written by Tertullian and the text by Giordani.

From Tertullian I went on to the other Fathers of the Church. Men like Justin, Ambrose, Augustine and Chrysostom all made a deep impression on me. In particular Chrysostom struck me because of his desire for a society of Christians in which even the laity, including married couples, would live like monks. At first this idea seemed strange, almost absurd, to

This is the site of the first Focolare Center at Piazza Cappuccini, no. 2 in Trent. After having met the spirituality of the Focolare Movement directly through its foundress, Giordani often went to Trent[1]. There he met the first community of persons committed to living the "divine adventure," as he himself described this way of living in a later book.

me. At that time I suffered from a sort of collective inferiority complex. We lay people, and especially those of us who were married, considered ourselves to be in an inferior category. We had the impression that from the door of the temple, the priest should declare to us "odi profanum vulgus et arceo." ["I hate the vulgar crowd and I shun them." (Horace, *Odes*, III, 1)]. I saw that there were very few married people in the litany of saints, except for a few widows and some martyrs. It seemed that our only hope of becoming saints was to become a widow or widower, or else be martyred.

I admired the great love that St. Ambrose and St. Augustine had for the Church. They described the Church as a vibrant community in which also married people, also the illiterate, workers and farmers had a vital part. Such a communitarian awareness seemed anachronistic to me as a young man, and yet, meditating on the Fathers of the Church, I experienced a real nostalgia for just that kind of awareness.

St. Augustine called the African farmers the living Church, and the fathers of families he called, "my companions in the episcopate, my co-bishops." Where did this idea exist in the Church of my time? It seemed to me that such ideals belonged to the early period of the Church and that we had to content ourselves with the crumbs of those ideals. We were, in a sense, the spiritual proletariat. Since I felt this way, I fell in love with the past, escaping a little into the glories gone by.

Through this love of the Fathers for the living Church, I soon became interested in the problem of

[1] *Trent is the city in northern Italy where the Focolare Movement started.*

Giordani always participated very actively in the summer meetings of the Focolare Movement. During the first ten years, until 1959, these took place in the valley of Fiera di Primiero in the Dolomite Mountains. Already then there were participants from every part of the world. Giordani contributed in many ways, also because of his knowledge of the Fathers of the Church. During those days, he saw their thought become a reality through the experience of life proposed by the Movement.

the unity of the Church. It seemed to me that the entire history of mankind was like a march returning to unity, to God. Sin had brought about separation; the Redemption had to recompose unity, making of all, Christ, the complete Christ. After having deplored the schism, the separation in protestantism, I began studying the protestant unionist movements. The separation had been provoked by political powers, unknown to the people. They had become Lutherans, and schismatics without knowing it. It seemed to me that it had been the political powers who had taken advantage of a theological idea tossed out by a theologian, in order to bring about the separation: "Divide and conquer." Once Christianity was divided, men and women could be exploited, subjugated, deprived of their freedom which had been assured them through the Redemption, and religion could be reduced to social duties, to mere works.

Naturally, another topic of great interest to me was Christian Sociology which promotes a society in which a person is really a person — with that freedom from misery, hunger and need. It is a society, therefore, in which all live as brothers and sisters. Was this possible? I investigated this subject in the Gospels and in the Fathers of the Church, and I found bold answers to my question. I saw that Christianity was the real revolution for every age. I then wrote a number of books on this topic.

When I met the first tiny "focolare," my spiritual position was, therefore, well-defined. I had my ideas. One beautiful day, upon entering a "focolare," I discovered that these ideas could become facts, that the Church of the Gospel and the Fathers could be lived, and was being lived in the 20th century. I was an expert on Christianity, but I was a very mediocre Christian. At the same time, I felt that I had to be mediocre since I was a lay person, and even more so because I was married.

During the second year following the war — I was a member of Parliament at the time — people started telling me about a Movement which had begun in Trent, started by a group of young women. I saw it as one of the many phenomena which sprang up during the post-war period. After so many disasters, especially in Italy, many people wanted to change the world. During this period, therefore, the world was full of reformers. There were those who took one approach and others who took another. Many came to me because I was a writer and a member of Parliament, to propose resolutions to cure all the social ills. So, when someone began telling me about a reform or about new ideas coming from Trent, I simply thought that it was one of these and shrugged it off.

I resisted a couple of years. One good soul kept insisting, "You'll thank me if you get to know this Movement." Then the day came in 1948 when an appointment was asked of me at the Montecitorio.[2]

2) This is the building which houses the Italian Parliament in Rome.

That was really the right place because there it was scientifically proven that we all are sinners. I thought, "They are good people. Let's meet with them here." The group who came to meet with me consisted of three religious, a young woman and a layman. They all belonged to the family of the Franciscans. The three religious were from the three Franciscan orders: one Capuchin, one Minor and one Conventual. The young woman, by the name of Chiara, and the young man were members of the Third Order. I was pleasantly surprised to see members of the three different Franciscan Orders all together. As a librarian, I had had the opportunity to see the volumes that had been written through the centuries about the disputes among the three Orders. I was edified to see them all united and I told them so.

They had come to ask me to find a place for them to stay in Rome. However, instead of talking about their lodging, they let the young woman speak. She told me how, during the war, a few girls had thought that it was worthwhile to give themselves completely to God. Since everything was crumbling, it was clear that only God lives, only God counts. Her words made an enormous impression on me. I could tell that this wasn't the usual sermon; there was something new here. After about ten minutes, when she had finished, she acted as if she were getting ready to leave.

I thought to myself, "I have to keep in touch with this person." So I asked her, "Why don't you write down what you've just told me so that I can publish it in the magazine, 'Fides'?" I made her promise me that she would do it and this made it possible for us to remain in contact.

Those young women had re-discovered how beautiful life really is, because it has been created by God who is eternal beauty. Why is it that when we open the newspapers, we read only bad news? I understood that these people were aware of the beautiful things in life. They lived for God and therefore they lived their lives completely. Usually we live life only halfway — the half that goes through the stomach, suffering all the sicknesses we know. We live the half that pertains to economic interests creating continual conflicts for us. Instead here I found an entirely new aspect of life that the majority of people did not know.

I began to understand life; I began to understand charity, love. I saw people who loved one another as children of God should love. . . .

As soon as I could, I went up to Trent. I took advantage of every trip to pass by Trent. Even if I had to go to Barcelona, London or Sicily from Rome, I passed through Trent. "Seek first the kingdom of God, the rest (even politics) will be given to you in abundance. (Matt. 19:29)

I understood that even in politics or economics it is useful and necessary to love one another as the Father has commanded us.

Through these contacts with the focolarini, I understood as never before how stupid hatred is. It is a waste of time, a waste of everything that is good. The person who hates is a walking corpse. Life instead could be found in loving.

The same thing happened to me that happens to all those who meet this Movement — a kind of second conversion. As a result, I had to change my apologetics completely. I understood that the important thing was not so much to try to prove the existence of God to those who deny it, but to show the life of God in us. If I live in God, anyone who sees me will recognize that God exists. The ancient pagan world converted not so much through talks (at that time, fortunately, there were no newspapers), as by seeing the way the Christians loved one another. I began to see the reality of this truth: that seeing our brother, we see the Lord. The result was a new way of living in society. If I see the Lord in every person, then I have to love them, and if I love them, then I have to serve them. Serving them, I have to take care of their needs as I would care for my own. I care for my own needs, caring for the needs of the others. I then began to change even the style of my apologetics.

Above all, I saw that the Church was being lived and I found a goal for the life of the married Christian. As I said before, I had felt that I was part of the proletariat of Christianity, someone who lives on the fringes. Here I found the way to share the life of virgins, of priests, of the entire Church. The treasures which they possessed, their contemplation and virtue, as well as their difficulties, became mine. They became my whole life, and therefore life became beautiful. Sanctity was no longer something foreign or remote. We could, and must, live a contemplative life. . . .

I understood St. Catherine better. As a young man, I had greatly admired her. She used to say that we should build a cell in our soul where we could contemplate God. But now I had discovered the way to contemplate God almost continually in my brothers and sisters. . . .

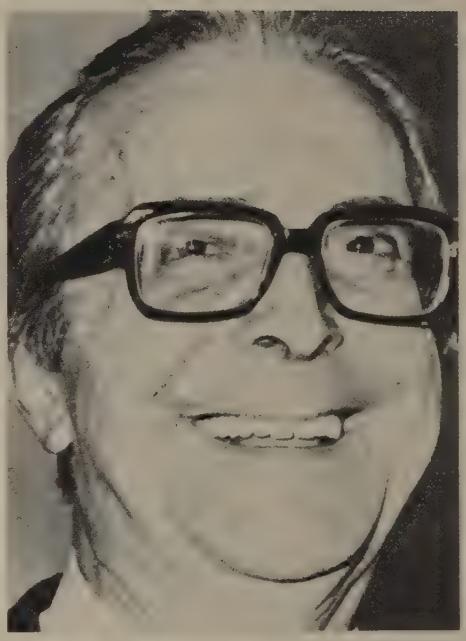
In this way, I comprehended many things more profoundly: how to live together, unity, the necessity of unity. God is one and the main characteristic of the Church, of every family, is unity. But what kind of unity? I saw it in the focolari, which were called at that time, "focolari of unity." Where charity, love, is lived, unity is there. When I meet another person, I make myself one with him or her, and in that moment a light, a reality blossoms in our midst - the presence of Christ. This idea was new to me.

Then I realized how enormously important the apostolate of charity was. Our age is an age of atomic, philosophical and spiritual disintegration. We no longer know how to live together. Outside of where Christianity is really lived, we continue to massacre one another. This is the experience I had while I was in politics — if a person is not a Christian, he or she takes more delight in hurting others than in doing good. In the focolare I saw that unity was a reality. So much so that I said to myself: here is the cure for the sickness afflicting humanity, a sickness that brings us to war again and again. The only reason why war did not break out again a few days ago is because the cannons and other weapons were not ready. Also because there are usually twenty years between one war and another. But war will continue to exist as long as the spirit

(continued on page 27)

HIGHLIGHTS OF A LIFE

Igino Giordani was born in Tivoli, Italy on September 24, 1894. His earliest memories are connected with the Aniene River. His mother, Orsolina, who, as he said, "did not know poetry, but washed rags," used to bring him down to the banks of the river and lie him between some bushes so that he wouldn't move while she rinsed and wrung out the clothes. His father, Mariano, was a brick layer. There were six boys and girls in the family. As soon as Igino was old enough to stand on his own two feet, his father enrolled him in school run by the brothers of the Confraternity of "Ponte e Orazione." They wore a long white habit and a short red cape, and were competing with other religious confraternities in the city. After he finished kindergarten, and all during his elementary schooling, Igino continued to return there every Sunday to serve Mass. After elementary school, he worked as an apprentice brick layer until he was thirteen years old. A specimen of his work still remains: a small brick basin on the side of a white building in the town of St. Gregory of Sassola. The owner, Anthony Facchini, realized that Igino was very intelligent and offered to pay his tuition to the seminary. There he studied until it was closed and was always first in his class. He then went on to public high school, and there, too, he graduated first in the whole school. In order to attend the University of Rome he had to take an entrance exam with the Department of Justice. He himself said later that he came out, "first in the subject matter and last in typing."



In 1915, after having been "beaten up" during a pro-war rally because he "condemned war," Igino Giordani was drafted and sent to Modena to become an officer. He was then sent to the front where he had his first rough experience of trench warfare. On July 7, 1916, during an Italian counter-attack, he was severely wounded on his leg and hand on the Mosciag, a large slope of Mount Zebio. He consequently received a silver medal.

He was transferred from the front to the Hospital of Baggina in Milan where he spent nine months. He subsequently spent three years in a hospital located in the villa of the Queen in Rome. While bedridden there, he completed his college studies. (Years later, when Queen Margherita[1] met him she recognized him and said, "You were the one who was always studying.") In moments of relaxation, especially during his convalescence, Giordani used to amuse himself by playing the violin. During his fourth year of hospitalization, he went on crutches to take his first exams at the university. Many others followed and later he received his degree in Literature and Philosophy. In all his years of military service he used his salary to support the members of his family.

---

[1] *Queen Margherita of Savoia was the first queen of Italy. She founded many cultural institutes and promoted the development of social aid.*

[2] *Luigi Sturzo was a priest, sociologist, and politician. He was considered the leading Catholic thinker in political and economic problems.*

In February of 1920, Igino Giordani married Mya Salvati, a girl from a well-to-do family of Tivoli. "She was a delightful young girl, full of joy and vitality, and in love with music. She had a beautiful, light, soprano voice." Mya was one of many children and her brothers soon became Igino's dearest friends. Immediately after their marriage they moved to Rome where he found a job as a substitute teacher.

Giordani met Luigi Sturzo[2] in Rome. Sturzo asked him to work on "Popolo Nuovo," a publication of the Italian Popular Party. He later became its editor. As a journalist, Giordani immediately took a position against Fascism which he believed destroyed freedom. He wrote a violent article in the "Popolo" denouncing the crime against Matteotti, which resulted in his name being taken out of the Directory of registered journalists. After this, Giordani continued to write, however using various pseudonyms. Piero Gobetti[3], in "The Liberal Revolution," categorized him as being among fifty "new men" capable of "realistic politics." In 1925, Gobetti himself published Giordani's first revolutionary work entitled *The Catholic Revolt.* In the same year, Giordani, together with Giulio Cenci, founded a monthly magazine called "Parte Guelfa." Its third edition was confiscated, and at the issuance of the fourth, the publication was suppressed. That same year, Giordani offered De Gasperi[4] his name for the publication of "The Historical Truth and a Campaign of Denigration."

After a year of teaching at the Cabrini Institute in Rome, Igino Giordani accepted an offer from the Vatican Library to travel to the United States to study Library Science at Columbia University in New York, and at the University of Michigan. There, having become good friends with the founder of the weekly magazine "Commonweal," he composed an anthology of contemporary North Americans and established a relationship with many Christian representatives of various Churches.

When he returned to Rome, Giordani directed a revision of the Vatican Library catalogue. He also obtained a position from Pope Pius XI for Alcide De Gasperi who had just gotten out of jail and did not have a cent to his name. In his free time, Giordani studied the Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church for many years. He translated the works of Tertullian, Justin, and John Chrysostom. In 1932 he became the editor of the monthly magazine "Fides." It became — as the "Roman Observer" wrote — the "most lively and engaging argumentative review of studies on Catholicism . . . the only one of its kind."

In the beginning of the 1930's, Piero Bargellini[5] wanted Giordani to collaborate with him in publishing the well-known magazine "Frontespizio." The two writers became very good friends. Here is a letter which Bargellini wrote to Giordani on May 10, 1935: "Dear Giordani, I've finally read the draft of your wonderful and important preface. I am really pleased with it. Thanks to you, I am sure that the collection of Polemicists will win approval. It is also thanks to you that the burden of my job as editor has been alleviated. I will now be able to say to all the collaborators who will want to: 'Follow in Giordani's footsteps.' And they will be stimulated to commit themselves to doing important works like yours. At this time I really can't understand how it is possible to not rejoice for the success of one's friends. There is nothing better than to be able to say, 'Well done,' to someone who has worked hard. And you, dear Giordani, have worked prodigiously well."

---

[3] *Piero Gobetti was a writer, a critic, an historian. He founded the weekly newspaper, "The Liberal Revolution," which left a lasting impression on Italian politics and culture.*

[4] *Alcide De Gasperi was an eminent figure in Italian politics who became the first President of the Italian Republic. He held this office from 1945 to 1953.*

[5] *Piero Bargellini was the author of many books, including one giving a panoramic history of Italian Literature.*

HIGHLIGHTS

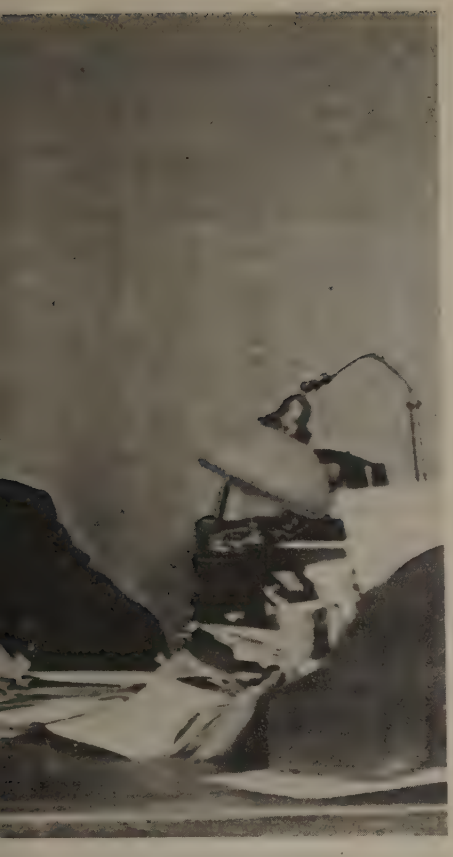
While Giordani was working for the "Frontespizio" he became friends with Papini, Giuliotti, Betocchi, Lisi, Fallacara, Father Ricciotti, Father Giuseppe De Luca, and other well-known writers. This excerpt is from a letter Giovanni Papini[6] wrote to Giordani on September 26, 1932 shows the open communication between the two in reference to a common cultural issue which was also highly controversial: "Returning home after a long absence, I found "Fides" containing your response to Croce. You can easily imagine what joy it gave me, having resigned myself some time ago to the cowardliness of Italian Catholics who seem ashamed to defend those who share their views and do not disgrace Catholicism. Your keen and fearless words have given me great consolation both because they are further evidence of your affection for me which I treasure and because the unwarranted vulgarity of the angry Montenerodomo acting as if he were God had to be pointed out by one of us."

In this picture we see Igino Gi
He had been asked to assume this

The book *Sign of Contradiction* written by Giordani in 1933, caused a great stir and had far-reaching effects. It was translated into French by Daniel Rops, into Czechoslovakian by Jan Brechensbauer, and into Spanish by M. Lamera. At that time, Daniel Rops referred to Giordani as a writer who gave evidence of being "magnificently free-spirited, with an acute awareness of Christian problems." The French author wrote a preface to his edition which said among other things: "Among the writers of young Italian Catholicism, whose dispostions are so varied, he occupies a special place. I would say that there is something of Bloy and Peguy in his work, both in his denunciations and in his affirmations, if it were not necessary to go back much further to find the origin of this great flow of Christian thought which urges on Bloy, Peguy, and Giordani himself. I mention these two names only in order to draw attention to an affinity there. I spoke of denunciations, and he is certainly a polemicist. But his entire work is dominated by an apologetic purpose, a purpose which it is now fashionable to ridicule in a literary manner, but which has given rise to writers who are anything but negligible: Pascal, Racine, Chateaubriand. More than being a polemicist, Giordani is an apologist. If he argues and denounces it is only with the intent of affirming . . . The background for his work, or if you prefer, his food for thought, is an in-depth knowledge of the Fathers of the Church which he acquired as a young man and which has had a considerable influence on him. One must read these pages in order to grasp what richness of substance is contained in the forgotten writings of many Fathers of the Church." Two years later, Giordani's *The Social Message of Jesus*, the first part of *The Social Message of Christianity* was published. Lagrange described it as an "indispensable foundation for any study of the social character of Christianity."

During the Second World War, Giordani took part in a series of meetings (usually held at night) with De Gasperi, Cadorna, Bonomi and other anti-Fascist figures. These meetings were held in private homes or in church basements, and they dealt with the formation of politics based on freedom and justice inspired by Christianity.

[6] Giovanni Papini was a writer, critic, and poet, who after searching for new spiritual experiences, returned to the Catholic faith. In 1921 he wrote The Story of Christ.



editor's desk of "Il Quotidiano."
Monsignor Montini in 1944.

At the start of 1944, Monsignor Montini (later to become Pope Paul VI) with whom Giordani had already established a cordial relationship, called him to the Secretariat of State telling him to ready himself to take over the direction of a Catholic newspaper, "Il Quotidiano," as soon as Rome would be liberated. As it turned out, the newspaper came out in May of that very year and it was noticeably successful. Giordani was courageous in his refusal of both Marxist materialism and bourgeois values, basing his writings on the Fathers of the Church. One day he was called into the private study of Pope Pius XII and questioned sternly: "Are you a revolutionary? There are authoritative sources who claim that you are. In fact you have written . . . " and here he cited a statement about the use of wealth in which it was affirmed that wealth could become theft. "That is true, Your Holiness," admitted Giordani, "but the words are from St. John Chrysostom." The conversation concluded with these soothing words from the Pope: "Don't you worry. Some people say that I'm a revolutionary too . . . What do you think of that?" "A Christian is someone who wants to change the world, therefore to bring about a revolution," responded Giordani."Only he does it with love, not hatred; building, not destroying."

In 1946 Giordani was elected a representative in the Italian Parliament. In 1947 he was elected to the City Council in Rome. In 1948 he became the editor of "Il Popolo." In the meantime, he interspersed his political and journalistic activities with trips to London, Spain, France, Portugal and Switzerland, where he met many political and religious figures. After being elected a representative in fhe first legislature of 1949, he spoke on the Atlantic Charter for an hour at the Parliament-house in Rome. Among other things, he said, "Every war constitutes a failure on the part of Christians." He often spoke out against the accumulation of armaments and against war. He felt that the Christian Democratic Party should promote "a movement among all the citizens of every State, among all the advocates of peace, from every land and every party (beginning with Christians) in order to arrive at a controlled universal disarmament of all weaponry." He expounded on this in Parliament on December 21, 1950. Notwithstanding the fiery atmosphere, in the end his proposal obtained unanimous approval.

In 1949, having left the editorial staff of "Il Popolo," he founded the weekly publication, "La Via." To those who asked him if this periodical were leaning towards the right or to the left he answered, "It is moving forward." With it, he hoped to introduce a Christian soul into politics. In this spirit, "La Via" continued to fight for an end to the cold war contending that, "Either Europe unites or Europe will perish." In 1953, the weekly publication which had also hosted sensitive and difficult debates was forced to shut down due to lack of funds.

Meanwhile, Giordani's children, Mario, Brando, Sergio and Bonizza, were growing up and pursuing various cultural interests. His active political career as a member of Parliament ended with the close of the legislature. Giordani was then called upon to direct the Library of the Parliament House in Rome because of his expertise in its subject matter.

In 1948, Igino Giordani had met the Focolare Movement. As he himself explained, its spirituality marked the beginning of a new phase in his life and his ideal struggle. Most of the articles in this edition of "Living City" are concerned with this phase of his life which lasted thirty-two years. Aside from being the Editor-in-chief of "Citta' Nuova," and the director of "Centro Uno" (an ecumenical center), he was also the director of the International School in Loppiano. (In this photo we see him visiting the city of Loppiano with Fr. Pasquale Foresi.)

Giordani continued his literary endeavors with new books of spiritual writings filled with the new experience which he was living. Among these were his *The Divine Adventure* and *Mary, Model of Perfection.* He also produced various other works on social, religious and patristic topics and took part in numerous conferences.

In 1960, already well-on in years, he set out on a trip to India and the Far East with his son Brando in order to gather material for a new book – *I Saw the Developing Church* – about the foundress of the Sisters of Canossa nd their missionary work. One of the most active sectors among his literary pursuits, however, was that of hagiography. One of his most famous works is his life of St. Catherine of Siena. Together with praising her strong spirituality, he extolled her historic importance. He also wrote the lives of St. John of God, St. Vincent de Paul, and others.

HIGHLIGHTS

After the death of his wife Mya in May of 1974, he lived the last years of his life in a community of the Focolare Movement, located at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa in Italy. ■

bibliography

We offer our readers here a list of those books written by Igino Giordani, which have been translated into English.

The Social Message of Jesus, *trans. Alba I. Zizzamia, Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1943.*

The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers, *trans. Alba I. Zizzamia, Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1944.*

Mary of Nazareth, a True Portrait, *trans. Mother Clelia Maranzana, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1947.*

Pius X, a Country Priest, *trans. Thomas J. Tobin, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1954.*

Catherine of Siena, Fire and Blood, *trans. Thomas J. Tobin, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1959.*

St. Paul, Apostle and Martyr, *trans. Mother Clelia Maranzana, Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1961.*

St. Vincent de Paul, Servant of the Poor, *trans. Thomas J. Tobin, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1961.*

Christ, Hope of the World, *trans. Mother Clelia Maranzana, Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1964.*

FOCOLARE ADDRESSES IN NORTH AMERICA

NEW YORK:
P.O. Box 496
New York, NY 10021

CHICAGO:
P.O. Box 53426
Chicago, IL 60653

BOSTON:
P.O. Box 239
Roslindale, MA 02131

SAN ANTONIO:
P.O. Box 32302
San Antonio, TX 78236

LOS ANGELES:
P.O. Box 71701
Los Angeles, Ca 90071

TORONTO:
P.O. Box 302 - Stn. T
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M6B 4A3

PRESERVE THE LOVE BETWEEN YOU

by ANNA MARIA ZANZUCCHI

Igino Giordani greets two newlyweds after their wedding at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa.

It had become a common sight for us: the hall overflowing with couples, many of them young, who had come from all over the world to attend meetings for married focolarini or New Families in the Movement. They were applauding Giordani, "Foco," as he arrived to address them.

He entered, raising his hand in a characteristic greeting. He was vivacious, as always, his glance filled with love. Often he would begin his talk with a playful remark such as this recent one: "Igino Giordani is old; he's not doing very well. But Foco is just fine!"

His personality, his wisdom and experience — his well-chosen words, were appreciated by everyone. His words created an atmosphere in which one was very aware of the presence of God. His words were persuasive and encouraging; they comforted and they transformed.

Addressing a group of married focolarini in November of 1975 he said: "You cannot imagine what joy it gives me to see so many of you here. Who could ever have imagined something like this thirty years ago? I dreamed of it. You could say that I had been dreaming of it ever since my youth, when I was studying the Fathers of the Church. But it seemed to me that a union between married people, lay people in general, and those consecrated to God was unattainable. Now, instead, something extraordinary has taken place. We married people too are consecrated

In these pictures we see Igino Giordani with participants in different meetings for married focolarini and the New Family Movement.

to God. Jesus had said these words for a reason, 'Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.' (Matt. 6:48) to everyone. Not only to the religious. . .

"Now we can fulfill these words in a marvellous way. We are living an amazing way of life. I receive letters from married people all over the world which really move me because I am discovering people who live like religious do, completely immersed in God. And they can go on to a mystical experience.

He once wrote: "Throughout the past centuries and continuing right up to 1948 when I first came in contact with the focolarini, a genuine separation had come about; a real division (like the caste system) between the religious and the clergy, on the one hand, and lay people on the other. . . ."

Giordani's encounter with Chiara Lubich sparked a new ray of hope for him — the discovery of a way in which he could within himself, bridge this separation by infusing the human with the divine.

Chiara remembers her meeting with Giordani. He was married and the focolarini were called to live a celibate life. "Giordani was a person," she said, "who had the same desires we had and a great soul which was not concerned solely with his family but, rather, was open to the Church and to humanity.

Some time later, something happened which confirmed Giordani's call to the focolare. In 1953 a large group of focolarini and focolarine consecrated their lives totally to God. In a private ceremony they pronounced their vows. Giordani was present. "Foco, the great soul that he is because of his studies, his experience, and his love for the Church," Chiara recalled, "felt in his soul a deep sense of admiration for what was taking place. . . for that place which virginity has in the design of Providence."

Giordani was married. He could not have pursued that way of life, but filled with a divine grace he praised God for what was taking place. Perhaps it was because of his humility (and humility always draws God's attention) that Chiara noting his desire to give himself totally to God,his spiritual detachment from everything — ideas, age, books, work, even from the fact of being married, and seeing that he was empty of self, and filled with the very charity of God — brought him into the spiritual life of the Focolare insofar as it was possible for a married person.

Thus, Giordani became the first married focolarino. "It was given to the writer of these words," he wrote some time later, "to be the first to have this vocation through a contact with the first focolarini. The one who directed and animated the Movement did not follow written guidelines, but obeyed inspiration and used her daily experience to build this new undertaking of which not even she knew the dimensions and goals. Seeing a married person among the focolarini, she permitted him to live according to their own statutes insofar as his marital status as the father of a family and a worker would permit."

When Giordani met the Movement he was fifty-four years old, in the prime of his life, enriched with learning and experience in every field. He had a beautiful family — four children and a wife he described as a "delightful" spouse and mother. However he knew how to give full value to this gift of God. He immediately sensed that this way of life had been made for everyone. He made room for it within himself and decided to follow this path for the rest of his life.

It was Chiara who defined this new vocation of the married focola-

rino. But she did it having before her eyes the person of Foco.

From that moment on, Giordani (and by now he was already called Foco) was not alone. Other married persons, avid for sanctity, followed him, committing themselves to live their entire lives in love, love for God which immediately expressed itself as love of neighbor.

"The married focolarini," said Foco as he outlined their vocation (and no one could do it better than he), "draw forth from the focolare, the home of priests or lay people consecrated to God in celibacy, the ferments of perfection and bring them into a world which is in need of just that.

"Drawing strength from the focolare, these people go out into the streets of the world, to distribute the virtues and graces accumulated there. In this way, they can help spread this wealth throughout all the parts of the Church. . . and of society. They bring the fire of life from one end of the earth to the other, rebuilding that bridge over the world to which the Church looks with confidence.

At the same time, the presence of married people in the focolare will prevent it from becoming a closed institution, from isolating itself. . . and it will keep it in contact with people of all kinds, from all places, in the same way that Jesus, Mary and the apostles always mingled with the crowds in order to sanctify them. . . Once they are admitted to the focolare, they (the married focolarini) take on all of its responsibilities. They have but one right — that of loving, which practically speaking, is that of service. In this way their souls will be 'virginized' and they will take on the priestly mission which is that of bringing what is sacred into a desecrated world. And they will maintain that reverence for and submission to those in the celibate life which the Church commands."

Many other families, in contact with the married focolarini, were led to renew their family life in an evangelical way. In order to keep them together and make of them a living community which could contribute to healing and renewing the family unit all over the world, Chiara Lubich founded the New Family Movement in 1967.

MESSAGE TO ENGAGED COUPLES

The engagement period, seen from a Christian point of view, is (and must be) a sort of "novitiate," and, thus, a religious preparation for that great "mystery" as St. Paul defines matrimony (Ephesians 5:32). It represents God's union with humanity and contributes to the union of Christ with his Church. Christ is the head of the Church and those born through matrimony are his body.

Therefore, you must not consider your wedding as an occasion for banquets, gifts and trips. No. It is an occasion, both human and divine, granted to you by God. In fact, it is a sacrament and, therefore, a means of bringing divinity into humanity. Furthermore, it is a sacrament of love, like the Eucharist. One points out God's love for men, the other points out man's love for God. Thus, spouses become collaborators with the Creator in bringing human life on earth. And through the sacrament, they are called upon to raise their children too, to divine life.

Therefore, engaged couples must cultivate the nourishment of this life — love.

Not the deformed and perverted love which we find in certain films, novels and newspaper articles, but the love which has a divine spirit, the total love which is God. The Bible teaches us that God is love and giving love to your fiance or fiancee is giving him or her, God.

For that reason, engaged couples are two souls exchanging unending love which comes from God. And by loving one another in God who, I repeat, is Love, they have the possibility to become saints. True happiness comes from him, as does the strength to live and the power to never die. For two people who love one another as God commands, death disappears. It is a passage to life everlasting. This is the wish that I have for each and every one of you.

Therefore, prepare for your upcoming marriage with the joyous riches of the Sacrament of human and divine love.

Your Foco

In his diary of January 10, 1960 he wrote: "If only the family were to become aware of its sacrament and use it. This is to say, if instead of just carrying out its functions of generating life, working, playing, coping with sickness and maintaining health, and resolving the many problems, it were to carry out its sacramental function as well — that of being a transmitter of divine life as well as physical life, and a model of the family of Nazareth, so that the father is Christ, the mother the Church, and the child Christ-Church; if it were to take its place in the world as a representation of the Eternal, like the Church which gives Christ to all people; if the family were to make its life a participation in the trinitarian life of God in heaven, achieving unity in the trinity (father, mother and child — one heart and one soul), then its journey through this earth would be a repetition of Calvary, and it would lead to redemption and resurrection."

On another occasion, at a meeting of the New Family Movement last February, he said, "Let me recommend one thing to you, engaged couples or spouses, preserve the love between you. Love one another more every day. Then the Lord will love you and give himself to you. He will give himself as Love. . ."

A few days before his death, my husband and I went to visit him. We brought him all the love and prayers of the married focolarini and the families in the Movement. Looking at us with his keen gaze, he said, "This is the most beautiful innovation in our whole Movement. It will be the salvation of society. Everything is of use, also your sacrifices. It is done now, for the most part. Now I can leave. . ." ●

GOD WAS HIS ONLY LOVE

by ANTONIO PETRILLI

When asked why he was called Foco (fire), Igino Giordani usually replied by quoting a saying of the Lord, "He who is close to me, is close to fire." In fact, all those who knew him experienced the reality created by his presence — namely, that coming in contact with him one felt closer to Christ.

His wife Mya had died peacefully in May 1974. He always remembered her as the beloved companion of his life. She had shared his hours of sadness — the difficult times of isolation and political persecution — and the joyful moments spent with their dear ones in the family. He had cared for her during her final illness, comforting her with his love and with his deep faith. After her death, in agreement with the rest of his family, he moved to Rocca di Papa and lived at the Mariapolis Center.

In this way one of his most cherished dreams came true in the last years of his life: to live in the focolare, as a person consecrated to God.

What did these years in the focolare mean to him? He told us that he experienced a new kind of peace, almost as if a new understanding of eternity had entered his soul. Yet this experience did not cause him to shut himself away in a life of solitary meditation. On the contrary, he began living an even more intense life, a life so active and dynamic that his presence soon became the heart which animated, and gave a new dimension to, the meetings at the Mariapolis Center. His life was an illustration of that *Divine Adventure* which he had written about and attracted a multitude of people of all ages to go to God together with him. Young people and children in particular, were struck by his testimony. Concluding an interview for the Italian television, he said, "Now that I live in the focolare, I have found authentic youthfulness."

It is not easy for those of us who lived close to him to describe all that his presence meant to us. For six years he insisted on calling himself a simple focolarino, yet we felt more like his disciples, and as such we lived. His messages, greetings, the experiences he shared with us, were words of great substance which entered our souls like fire. They transformed and converted us, fruit of wisdom coming from life.

At the Mariapolis Center he liked to mingle with the crowd. When asked to talk about the Movement and what it meant to him, he would repeat over and over the story of those first years in Trent and at Tonadico di Primiero. There he had had his deepest experience of God. It was a story that no one, young or old, ever got tired of hearing, because it conveyed the enchantment, the divine vitality resulting from the graces of the early years of the Movement.

> **"All that is happening to me is actually God's love. It is happening because I have loved God, because I had no other love but him, nothing else."**

During meetings, Foco would often go and sit on one of the park benches outside the Mariapolis Center. These benches became chairs of instruction. The image of Foco, surrounded by groups of people on the lawn, is still vivid in our mind. Focolarini, volunteers, Gen, married people, priests, nuns and religious, would then gather around him asking questions, and seeking advice.

One could understand the ideal spoken of in the talks given in the meeting hall by looking at him. He loved everyone without distinction because in everyone he loved Jesus. He gave the same attention to simple people coming to the meetings for the first time, and wanting an explanation of the spirituality, as he gave to famous personalities with whom he corresponded. And his conversations could last for hours, without diminishing in intensity.

He was one in the midst of many, a member of the Movement just like anyone else. He considered himself to be the "least" of the disciples of Chiara Lubich. Yet we remember him, and shall always remember him, as the "first" disciple of the ideal to which he gave everything. He became so much a part of it that he was and is a "banner" of this Ideal of life for all generations.

The last months of his life, were for us a tremendous lesson. He left us the most eloquent pages of his story although unable to write. It was a period when he gave witness, to the very end, to the faith and the ideals that had inspired his whole life. Those months were his living legacy.

"I used to think that union meant to be 'with' God," he had written several years ago, "now I feel it is unity. . . " In the focolare he always sought to have a strong bond of unity with the others. He felt it was a necessity in order to be closely bound to God. Even when his illness kept him bedridden, he still wanted to participate in our life together in the focolare as much as possible. For instance he would have liked to join us at mealtimes. His presence compelled us to live in such a way that the reality of the focolare — Jesus in our midst — would never be missing. We experienced that the more our mutual love and unity grew, the more he felt strengthened by Jesus in the midst. Thus he became, in a sense the thermometer of our unity. One day he said, "Our coming together in this divine life is an extraordinary source of strength."

Here we see Igino Giordani with some young people, on the occasion of one of their conventions at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa. During an interview for the Italian television, he had said, "Now that I live in the focolare, I have found authentic youthfulness."

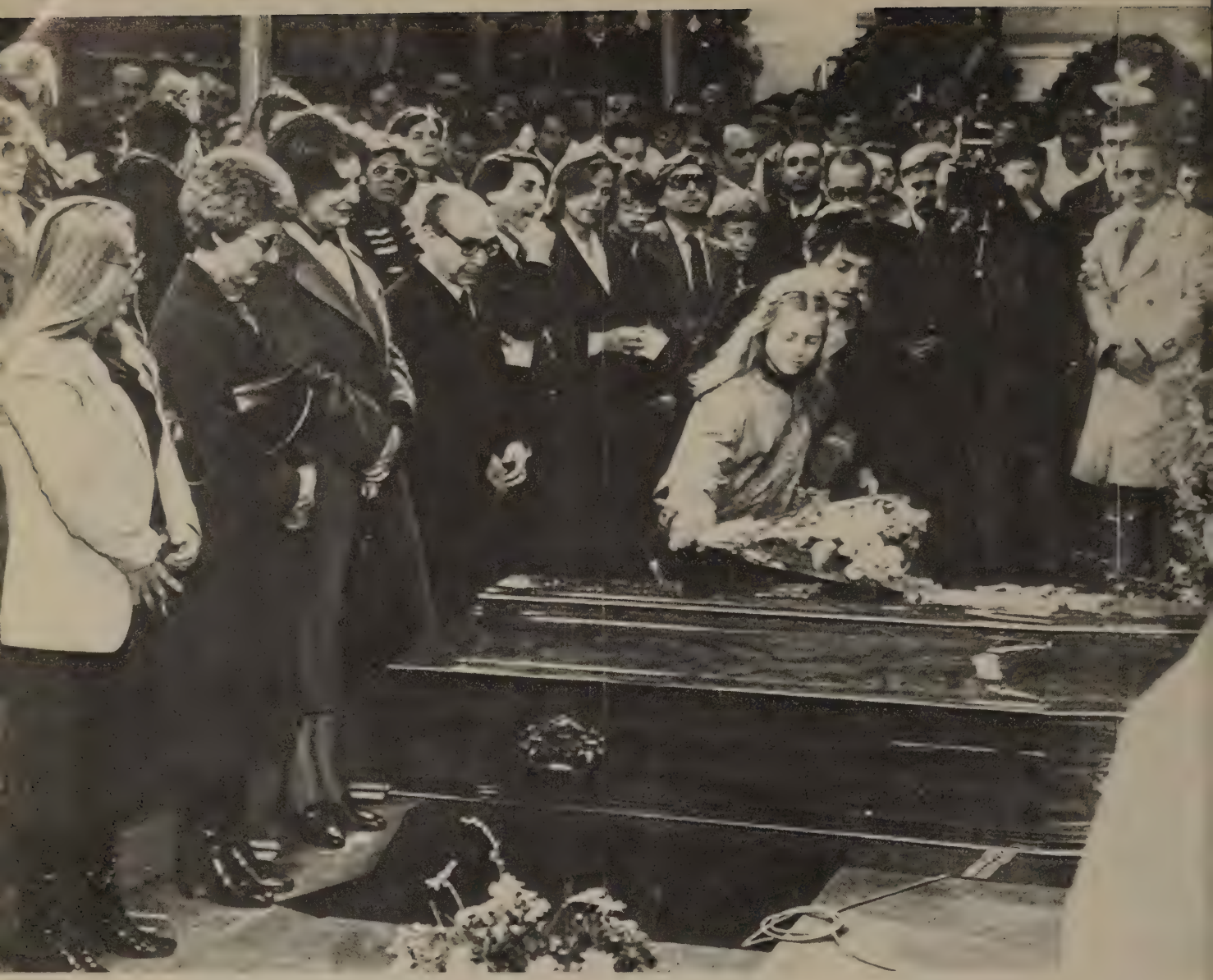
He would often say how much of a family the focolare was because of love and what a tremendous thing this was. The family in fact, for him, had always represented the reality which here on earth incarnates the ideal of love in a human-divine dimension. During the last period before his death, it seemed as though the two poles of his life — his natural family and the focolare — had become one reality.

We knew that one of his greatest joys was to see the bond of friendship and love existing between us and his children. During his last weeks we often saw his face beam with happiness in looking at all of us together sitting around his bed. For him, love had made us all his children and all brothers in God: one family.

The married focolarini were always present in Foco's heart. Their letters, from all parts of the world, gave him special joy. They were grateful to him for having opened to married people such a way of being consecrated to God in the focolare.

As his illness progressed, the lives of those of us privileged to live with him became more and more an act of service and love for Jesus crucified. It was as though we were moving around an altar. The most beautiful moment of the day, however, was when we would celebrate Mass in his room. It seemed to us that the supernatural atmosphere reached its highest peak at that moment. During the day, we made a constant effort to keep Christ spiritually present among us and when he made himself present among us sacramentally as well, we lived inexpressible moments of joy.

Foco received Jesus in the Eucharist every day. When asked at what time he would like to receive Jesus, even when he was tired, his face would light up and he would say, "Right now." In those moments we realized what the Eucharist meant to him. "How lucky I am," he told us once, "being able to receive Communion here at home every day."



April 21, 1980. The last salute to Igino Giordani at the Mariapolis Center. His granddaughter Simona laid a bouquet of flowers on the coffin. Gathered around are his children, relatives, leaders of the Focolare Movement, representatives of various Christian Churches, members of parliament, civil authorities, television reporters, journalists, and a great multitude of friends, all in a climate of great serenity.

Then he shared this thought: "Christ unites us to himself through the Eucharist which is Love, and through suffering which is divinized love. Thus the commandment of the Last Supper keeps being transmitted and lived. Christ redeemed us with suffering and continues to redeem us through suffering and love." (Jan. 30, 1980).

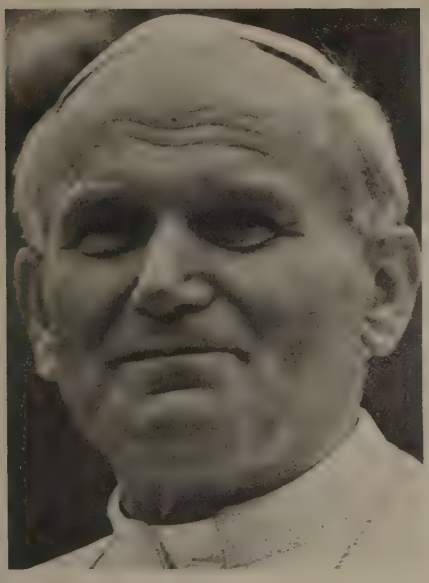
He received one of his greatest consolations when Chiara came to bring him the Pope's blessing. He kept the framed document on the wall in front of him so that he could look at it, and occasionally asked to hold it in his hands. He had loved the Church intensely throughout his entire life: working and suffering for it. Now he felt as though this gift from the Pope was the Church's response to this love.

"He who sees his brother, sees the Lord." We heard him repeat this sentence many times. Charity, love for Jesus in his neighbor was so much a part of him that even toward the end, when he was in need of everything, he continued giving of himself to the others. They who were there to help him ended up being helped.

His love for Christ was so deeply rooted that those around him were unaware of his daily suffering as he offered up his illness to God. This love absorbed all suffering and transformed it into itself. Only on occasion, when he dictated some of his thoughts, we realized how his peace actually sprang from the depth of suffering. "We have never been so much one with Jesus as we are now that, co-crucified with him, we can give him the joy of our living participation" (Jan. 25, 1980).

Up to the very end he gave witness to his esteem and deep gratitude

Expressions of sorrow and condolences for the death of Igino Giordani reached his family from all over. We print here only two.

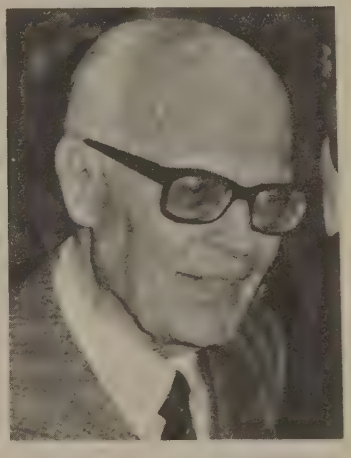


Pope John Paul II

Vatican City, April 19, 1980

Upon hearing the sorrowful news of the death of Igino Giordani, beloved father and professor, the Holy Father recollected himself in fervent prayer for the repose of this chosen soul. He dearly recalls this illustrious figure who gave an unshakable witness of Christian faith in our times, through an exemplary and diligent life based on the Gospel and numerous apologetic writings on doctrine full of wisdom. As a sign of his benevolence, the Holy Father heartily imparts to all his children, relatives and friends the comforting apostolic blessing, as a sign of that hope which does not deceive.

Cardinal Casaroli
Secretary of State



Rome, April 21, 1980

I was deeply saddened by the news of the death of Igino Giordani, with whom I felt a deep friendship. I am moved as I remember him today — a noble person with a high moral and democratic conscience. In this moment of sorrow I wish to express to his family and relatives my condolences and heartfelt sympathy.

Sandro Pertini,
President
Italian Republic

to Chiara, the foundress of the Movement. He was tremendously grateful for the gift of the Ideal to which he had totally consecrated his life. His speeches to the various groups which came to the Mariapolis Center were constant calls to remain faithful to the authentic spirit of the Movement, an invitation always to draw from the source of the charism which had been given to the Movement.

God was his only great love. God had taken possession of his soul and had filled his existence. This love for God overflowed into love for his brothers and sisters.

The focolarini who assisted him during his illness recall these among his last words: "All that is happening to me is actually God's love. It is happening because I have loved God, because I had no other love but him, nothing else." ●

The Anglican bishop Clifford Bishop attended the funeral of Igino Giordani at Rocca di Papa, as did other representatives of Christian Churches from Great Britain, Germany, and Switzerland. They offered their testimony to Giordani's work for the promotion of ecumenism.

DIARY OF FIRE

by IGINO GIORDANI

The following excerpts are taken from the last book written by Igino Giordani, entitled "Diary of Fire." It was published by Citta Nuova shortly before his death.

May, 1941

You become upset with many events and people around you, because you put your small ego at the center of everything: then you see it vacillate and you don't make it in the struggle. Place God at the center and he will be like a monolith in the midst of a cloud of mosquites. He will not be disturbed and you will not be either. How can you imagine God becoming preoccupied with revolution and persecution, with fights and aggression? One breath is enough for him to put them back into the nothingness from which they came, out of envy.

August 17, 1944

Faith turns suffering into love. In Christianity, everything turns into love, for Christianity is a constant source of love.

July 14, 1948

What else could it mean "to do wrong," when it comes to the relationship with other people, if not lacking in love? Augustine has touched the very essence of Christianity when he said that he who loves does not do wrong. He who doesn't love, does wrong. In other words, we always go back to the same point: love is the shape that truth takes in the sentiments, and truth is the shape that love takes in the intellect — and truth-love is the same thing as life, because it is the spirit of God which is Life. If we try to work outside of this reality in politics, then it collapses every moment. The same is true of our health which deteriorates all along if our body is fed on surrogates. The more we detach ourselves from love, the more we come closer to death, through the avenue of hatred, violence, deceit — they are all violations of truth-love.

September 3, 1954

If universal history is the fifth Gospel for humanity, the personal events making up one's life are the same thing for each individual. When we look at our lives through the eyes of God, it appears as a plan to bring us back to unity with God from dispersion. We understand then that detachment from loved ones, the loss of honor and prestigious positions in life are nothing but becoming free from human factors in order to go steadily alone toward the Only One, alone toward God. At this point, every day has the value of a divine adventure, if it has helped us to go along the ray of sun — your ray which is connected to the Sun of God. It is called marching toward death, while it is progress toward freedom — for at the end of this road the Father is awaiting you. It is therefore going toward life, the life that has no end.

June 20, 1958

I need everything and no one, at the same time. Only God — only God I need. Without food I cannot live, without air I suffocate, without clothes I freeze, without friendship I am saddened. Joy comes from family, friends. Rivals and enemies are useful to me because they force me to forgive, thus urging me to love: and loving is joy. And yet I can say that I could live without all this — I can also die after great suffering. But if God is present, all in him is nothing: nothingness is for him everything — he makes death a door into life, abandonment he transforms into an epiphany: for him, to suffer is to gain access to the Wound, where one finds heaven. How much good I received from my parents and brothers, from my wife, children, relatives, benefactors, from my childhood up to now. If I lose them, however, I will find them again in God. If I lose God, I lose all with me. Everyone is useful — only God is necessary. Only with him, I have all of them with me from eternity.

January 28, 1960

Last night it seemed as if I were in the aridity of a desert without a blade of grass, raging with thirst. I suffered from universal abandonment; I could not feel the presence of God-Love; I did not experience the love of man. But I could understand why the saints had chosen not joy but suffering in abandonment, in the footsteps of Jesus on the cross. I could understand why Jesus had asked us to take up our cross and, having left all things to follow him. . .

I fell asleep in that solitude, almost as if my spirit was dying out.

And this morning what came to mind were the words of a popular song — a beautiful one — a song to Mary. Love came back from her, as the blue appearing in the morning, as water from a spring, like we see flowers come through the ground that has been worked on, turned upside down, imbued with chemical products; from desolation, love incarnate comes to life, Mary. Mary who gives us love made flesh. . .

Is Mary then the secret to transform suffering into love?

1966

When you will be interested in nothing else but the glory of God, when in your soul there will be no room but for God in heaven and your neighbor on earth, when in no moment you will see yourself anymore, then you will be free. You will not belong to that bundle of ambitions, greed, passions that is forming your ego — Nothingness — but you'll belong to Life, to Eternity, to God who is Everything.

PIONEER IN ECUMENISM

March 29, 1967. Igino Giordani, director of "Centro Uno" of the Focolare Movement, presents Anglican bishop W.S. Llewellyn to Pope Paul VI during an audience at St. Peter's. The audience took place during a meeting of Catholics and Anglicans at Rocca di Papa.

by GABRIELLA FALLACARA

"I became aware of the ecumenical problem shortly after World War I when, travelling in the United States, I came in contact with many different Christian Churches. Afterwards I returned to Italy to work in the Vatican Library, and there I began my prolonged study of the early Fathers of the Church. I discovered them to be, Greek and Latin alike, geniuses of sanctity. What I especially admired in their writings was the ardent zeal with which they cultivated the consciousness of Christian unity." This was how Giordani described the birth of his ecumenical calling.

"My experience in America was enriched by my study of current ecumenical movements, and also by my study of the Church Fathers, and this led to several actions. First, I began to work for "Fides," a magazine published in the Vatican. In 1932 I became the editor of this publication, which I saw as a vehicle for reviving an interest in ecclesial unity in Italy. Then in 1939 I wrote *The Protestant Crisis and the Unity of the Church.* The book met with some success. A magazine in Chicago claimed that it gave testimony to the growing interest in ecumenism even among European Catholics. It then went on to refer to Abbot Paul Couturier of France, Father Max Pribilla of Germany, and the 'Jesuit priest' Igino Giordani of Italy. An error of this nature was a sign of the times. It was difficult to conceive of a layman having an interest in theology in general, let alone ecclesiology.

"'Fides' was just a modest bulletin in its early days. Gradually it developed into a monthly publication with national distribution, and I saw to it that the ecumenical ideal also became a part of its format."

In 1951, Bishop Aristide Brunello wrote an article describing Giordani in this way: "He was such a vigorous apologist that he could well have been called 'the Tertullian of the twentieth century.' He was a vehement and incisive polemicist, as is evident from many of his articles in 'Fides.' Reading these articles today, one might find them to be rather harsh, even belligerant, but account must be taken of the times in which they were written."

The magazine is still very much alive in the memories of hundreds of bishops and priests who acknowledge the good they derived from it during their years of formation. Those pages kept them informed of the entire life of the Church, and of the various Christian religious movements as well. The publication was prized by Popes Pius XI, Pius XII, and by the future Paul VI, who saw in it the true Catholic magazine.

By the eve of the Second World War, "Fides" was already counted by Giovanni Papini as being ". . . among the signs that bear witness to a reawakening of the Italian Catholic conscience." Similar recognition came from such authoritative Catholic sources as the "Osservatore Romano," "La Civilta Cattolica," and the "Assistente Ecclesiastico."

Due to the lively style and solid con tent of the articles, "Fides" influence reached not only national but international proportions, particularly in the ecumenical field, precisely because unity among Christians was one of its objectives. For many years it continued to be the authoritative voice on the subject in Italy.

In September of 1948, when Giordani first met Chiara Lubich, he asked her to write for "Fides" what she had just recounted to him. "I was attracted to the Movement by its ideal of universal unity based

Here we see Igino Giordani with Pastor Fritz Peier from the Reformed Church of Switzerland.

Igino Giordani greets Metropolitan Gennadios, Greek-Orthodox bishop of Crete, during an ecumenical meeting sponsored by the Focolare Movement.

on the Testament of Jesus," he stated at an ecumenical convention in 1976. From that first encounter onward, his life became entwined with that of the Movement.

What followed was a maturation of the ecumenical vision of Giordani which manifested itself in his writing. As he tells it: "The conversion that took place within me was noticeable by the change in my polemic style; from that time on my goal became to persuade rather than to win." "The keen intelligence guiding an incisive polemic," as "Il Meridiano" labeled it, was now expanding more and more in the direction of charity in truth, a truth based on mutual charity.

In 1961 "Centro Uno," the ecumenical center of the Focolare Movement, was opened in Rome

and the direction of it was entrusted to Giordani.The need for such a center came about in this way: several German Lutheran pastors, on hearing Chiara Lubich speak, expressed their amazement that Catholics were living the Gospel. As a result of this meeting, these pastors were eager for the spirituality of the Movement to spread in Germany. This led, within a short period of time, to a multiplication of ecumenical contacts. Giordani, because of his experience as a precursor and lay pioneer of ecumenism, was the right person to assume the responsibility for "Centro Uno."

"Centro Uno" was born as the point of reference and encounter for the ecumenism of the Movement. For over fifteen years in its offices near Piazza Navona in Rome, Giordani applied to his daily work, his wealth of doctrine rendered with simplicity and humor. . .the wisdom of his interpretation of events, the ingenuity of a worker who knows how to hope and wait, but never puts off until tomorrow what can be done today.

I remember him like this: direct and youthful, with the heart of a partiarch, spontaneous in humility and steady in prayer. He possessed a tremendous capacity for communication with young people, important personalities, and with ecumenists, whether they be bishops of the Orthodox Church, the Reformed Church, the Anglican Communion, or followers of Zwingli and Calvin. People of the most varied backgrounds found themselves taken up in a dialogue that often "opened new horizons."

After his move to the focolare in Rocca di Papa in 1974, he would go to his office in "Centro Uno" twice a week. The rest of his work he carried on from the Mariapolis Center, and it was there that many Christians of various churches came to know him.

Since 1961 "Centro Uno" has sponsored thirty-seven ecumenical conventions. Besides participating in these, Giordani also spoke privately with representatives from all over Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. During this period he also continued to write articles on Christian unity for the "Osservatore Romano," "L'Avvenire," "Oikoumenikon," "Unitas," "Citta Nuova," and others. These periodicals provided a platform from which he sought to sensitize the "collective memory" to the duty of Christian unity by reporting the current situation in the ecumenical world.

Giordani greatly admired Cardinal Bea, and wrote of him: "During the years of the Council and in those that followed, there was not to be found among Christians of all the churches, a person who longed for unity more than Cardinal Bea. Because he was able to interpret the greatest aspirations of contemporary ecumenism and present and defend them with a prudence coupled with a remarkable daring, he was revered by people of every class, race and faith throughout the world. . .It was Cardinal Bea who gave to our Movement the Holy Spirit as its patron. He was impressed by the programs of the Focolare, based on the ideal of unity, which is the apex of charity, to be brought into a world threatened by divisive ideologies and political hegemony, and pushed by technology into becoming a desert of individualism, desperate and isolated."

Giordani passionately lived for the ecumenism of the Movement. Though well advanced in years he travelled to the little town of Ottmaring in Germany, as well as to London and throughout Switzerland.

During a visit two weeks before his death, his son, a chief of surgery, heard him speak of "mutual love," and "the unity of all Christians," and commented to the young doctor accompanying him: "This is the moment of truth. A man in this condition speaks of the things he lived for all his life. You can tell that he lived for the unity of Christians." At Giordani's funeral, the presence of many ecumenical leaders including: Clifford Bishop, Anglican bishop of the Church of England; Pfarrer and Irene Furst, Lutherans from Ottmaring; Fritz Peier, Reformed pastor of Baar, Switzerland, and his wife, Anneli; and Doctor John Taylor of the Methodist Church, representing the World Council of Churches, gave testimony to these words. Igino Giordani had truly lived for the unity of Christians. ●

HOW I MET THE FOCOLARE

(continued from page 11)

of peace is lacking, as long as we fail to admit that by killing another human being we are killing an image of God, because every person is an image of Christ. . . .

I realized that even a member of Parliament could live this kind of life. Anyone, no matter what his state of life, could live the apostolate of Mary. How did the Madonna live her apostolate? In a hidden way. Her Son was the Word. She was the Silence. But she was the leaven, the uniting force. We see her later in the Cenacle, at the center of the living Church, but she did not speak. She united the others. She was full of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit she cemented the Church whose reality is to be one heart and one soul.

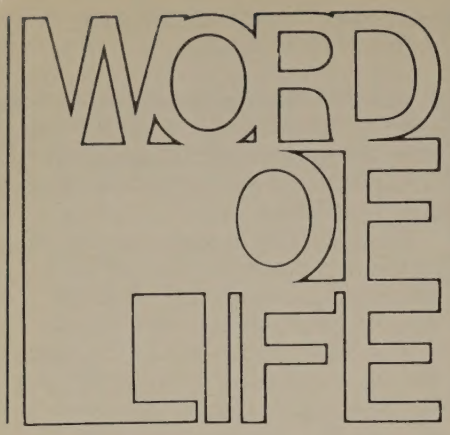
This communitarian life where charity, love, circulates — charity which is God in our midst and within us — could solve the problems of our times.

Talks can be useful, but we have to remember that Jesus "coepit facere et docere" ["Jesus began to act and then to teach." (Acts 1:1.] It is necessary to live first and then to speak. This renews the Church, which is not an antiquated institution. The Church is an institution for all times. It is our life; we are the Church.

The Church is also where the bishop is. I acquired a deep respect for the priesthood through the focolarini. I really understood how the priesthood is a means for bringing the divine into the human.

Lived in this way, our life becomes a continuation, almost a realization, moment by moment, of the Incarnation. It becomes the life of mankind and of God: God and man at the same time. Inasmuch as we are Church, we are God and man who continues. Christ is our head, and we are Christ who continues to act. We become the arms of Christ. We are Christ in our midst. Then life is worth living. It is the life of the angels, the life of God — God in us. We are made to be great; we with all our failings, we who are nothingness, can become great by being an emptiness which is filled with God. ●

* *From "The Focolare Movement" Citta' Nuova Ed. 1965*



". . . one thing only is required."

(Luke 10:42)

Do you remember where Jesus said this famous sentence? He was at the home of the sisters, Martha and Mary. Mary was seated at his feet, listening to him, while Martha was busy with all the duties of hospitality. She turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, are you not concerned that my sister has left me to do the household tasks all alone? Tell her to help me." But Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about many things; one thing only is required. Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it."

". . . one thing only is required."

At times we think, and perhaps also you have thought, that Jesus considers the behavior of the sisters to be in contrast to one another. Mary's way of acting is good, but Martha's is not. By listening, Mary is acting correctly, while Martha is wrong in working. But this is not the case. Jesus does not condemn Martha's work. In fact, Martha is serving; and it was service that Jesus had come to teach.

What meaning then can we give this incident in the Gospel?

Jesus used this situation to explain what is most necessary in the life of a person.

". . . one thing only is required."

Which one? Listening to the word of Jesus. For Luke, who wrote this passage, listening to the word also meant living the word.

Mary then is the model of the Christian. Therefore, she is also a model for you who wants to listen to and to live the word of God. It is often thought that Mary symbolizes the contemplative life, as opposed to Martha who is the symbol of the active life. But Mary did not only contemplate; she listened and lived.

Jesus wants to tell you with these words that the important thing for you is to listen to his word and to put it into practice. Everything else, no matter how important it may seem, has to be considered secondary to this.

God and his word must be put in the first place. You have to put aside your worries and aspirations.

". . . one thing only is required."

Mary possessed this one thing. She wanted to learn; she was completely disposed to listen to the word and the will of God. She showed this by her behavior. The Gospel says that she, ". . . sat down at the Lord's feet." She behaved as a disciple would, being attentive to his master.

You have to do the same thing — receive the word and allow it to bring about a transformation in you. But this is not all. You must remain faithful to it, keep it in your heart so that it can model your life, like the earth, which encompasses the seed so that it can sprout and bear fruit. Let it bring, therefore, fruits of a new life, which are the effects of the word.

Do not do it only when it is easy, but always. Continue even when trials or sufferings enter your life, making it more difficult to remain faithful to the resolution you have made.

". . . one thing only is required."

Take courage then!

Until now you have lived perhaps according to human words. You have given importance to a thousand things which life has offered you, without understanding that you were born for another goal.

The very fact that you are human links you to Christ — God made man for you.

The fact that you are also a Christian implies a very precise responsability. Everything is secondary to listening to and living the words of Jesus, your Master.

Try to put his sublime, universal, unique words into practice one by one. You will notice a radical change in yourself and you will bring about a real transformation in your way of thinking and acting. You will have the impression that your life has become extremely rich — and it will be so. You will work for the ultimate good of yourself and others, and the world around you will change. The revolution of the Gospel will prove to be most effective in meeting the urgent needs and problems of today. There is still more — you will save yourself, winning the life that does not pass away.

And this is not little.

CHIARA LUBICH

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one...that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me..." (Jn. 17,23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

NCP spirituality

chiara lubich

when did we see you, lord?

The extraordinary dignity of every person, each individual's capacity for the infinite, and the need to discover God in our fellow human beings are some of the recurring themes here. The question, "Who is my neighbor?" is answered in the light of the Old and New Testaments, and in terms of our relationship with other Christians, with members of other religions, and with non-believers. Reflecting on the more than thirty-five years of experience of the Focolare Movement, the author describes how, by loving others, people can move from lives that are meaningless and empty to lives that are full and, in a real sense, divine.

ISBN O-911782-34-6 Paper $2.50

NCP family education

Spartaco Lucarini
THE DIFFICULT ROLE OF A FATHER

ISBN O-911782-32-X Paper $2.25

Anne Marie Zanzucchi
THE DIFFICULT ROLE OF A MOTHER

ISBN O-911782-33-8 Paper $2.25

Anne Marie Zanzucchi
MY CHILD AND GOD, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE FAMILY

ISBN O-911782-33-8 Paper $2.25

Send orders to:
NEW CITY PRESS, 206 Skillman Avenue,
Brooklyn, NY 11211, Tel. (212) 387-3454

livingCity is something special livingCity is something special
livingCity is something special livingCity is something special
livingCity is something special livingCity is something special